



ASSEMBLY DAY 2025

Addressing the impact of masculinity influencers on teenage boys

Session 3 Parallel Workshops

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ÚBÚNTÚ

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SESSION 3 PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

Meet the facilitator:



Dr Darragh McCashin is an Assistant Professor in the School of Psychology at DCU, and is Chair of The Observatory on Cyberbullying, Cyberhate & Online Harassment in the Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC). Darragh is broadly interested in digital mental health and wellbeing, clinical/forensic applications of technology, and academic mental health. Darragh is the Principal Investigator of The Observatory project in ABC where he co-authored the recent guide "Addressing the impact of Masculinity Influencers on Teenage Boys - A guide

for schools, teachers, and parents/guardians", funded by the Department of Justice.

Previously, Darragh was a Marie Curie Fellow/PhD researcher at University College Dublin (UCD), examining technology-enabled youth mental health within the EU H2020-funded TEAM-ITN project, examining the role of technology-assisted cognitive behavioural therapy for children in primary care using mixed methodologies. Darragh also has a background in applied forensic psychology (MSc), specifically the psychology of internet sexual offending. Darragh currently sits on two COST Action Working Groups: Researcher Mental Health Observatory (ReMO; CA19117), and Digital Mental Health for Young People (YouthDMH; CA23153), and is a member of the Criminal justice Open Research Dialogue (CORD) Partnership in Ireland.



Overview: This workshop will address the issue of masculinity influencers and their impact on teenage boys using a three-part format.

- **Part one** will briefly address the ecosystem of online masculinity influencers, current research data on their prevalence, and the overall impacts on boys and their networks.

- **Part two** will present the journey of The Observatory's new educational resource to address these issues, including core guidelines and good practices for teachers and parents, in addition to critical reflections on the sensitivities and controversies of discussing masculinity in the current Irish context.
- Finally, **part three** will provide a breakout space for attendees to critically consider how to apply this resource in their contexts, and a facilitated critical group reflection will close the workshop.



Key points discussed:

- We know. Online - Boys are being conditioned to take on views of masculinity influencers. Resulting in mental health issues, negative attitudes to women.
- Research study <https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2024/11/Evolving-Manhood-Core-Research-and-Womens-Aid.pdf> "Exploring manhood - attitudes, influence and wellbeing among men"
- Online algorithms may hook boys by suggesting content that at first seems benign (gym routines) but which becomes a gateway for promoting discriminatory content - Baker, 2024.
- There will be more Tates and worse.
- Where is the genuine online space that addresses boys issues - it's not there!
What does it mean to be a boy/man in 2025? What is a man's role in modern day society - has the changing role of women meant that men don't know where they stand?
- What is "positive masculinity"?
<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/iss21/PositivMascProjectReport2023.pdf> UCC study.
- Types of consumers of this type of info:
 - 1. Edgy entertainment
 - 2. Informative - on how a man should be
 - 3. Parrots - looking for information to repeat that will get a reaction
 - 4. Implicitly believes it.
- Having an open conversations with boys is the first step towards addressing the issue

Testimonials



My key takeaway from today is to read more, learn more, increase my own knowledge and awareness on masculinity in particular but other issues too.

I would like to bring issues related to the Masculinity workshop to the attention of School Management, and how the content can inform and enhance the Unconscious Bias lessons that our TYGCE students run with our JC students...and the fact that I may need to play a bigger role.



Resource:

The Observatory's resource can be downloaded at: <https://antibullyingcentre.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/DCU-Influencer-Resource.pdf>